Approved for Release: 2018/10/05 C06627649

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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

National Intelligence Bulletin

[redacted] 3.5(c)

~~Top Secret~~

[redacted] 3.5(c)

February 21, 1975

No. 636

Approved for Release: 2018/10/05 C06627649

Approved for Release: 2018/10/05 C06627649

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ARGENTINA

The army's operation that began ten days ago against Peoples Revolutionary Army guerrillas in Tucuman Province is faltering.

The army has a reservoir of officers and noncommissioned officers who are highly trained in commando-type tactics, and many of them have been assigned as advisers to regular units in the operation. However, Argentine army commander Lieutenant General Anaya reportedly is not heeding the advice of his counterinsurgency experts. Instead of employing small-unit, commando-type tactics, Anaya acceded to political pressure and ordered the army to conduct a 5,000-man sweep operation in the southwestern part of the province. Anaya does not want to alienate the people and has instructed his officers to make apologies in advance for any "inconveniences" they might suffer--thus signaling the army's target areas to the guerrillas. Only a few casualties have been reported thus far on both sides.

The Peoples Revolutionary Army units in the province are well suited for irregular operations, have an established logistic base, and enjoy considerable support among the rural population. They could conceivably inflict heavy casualties on isolated regular army units.

General Anaya has been criticized before by other officers for his failure to demand a full-scale army counterterrorist role. They are now criticizing him for acquiescing to political pressure for a highly publicized show of force. Increasing criticism from these elements can be expected in an effort to force Anaya to switch from sweep operations to commando-type tactics. If his critics are successful in forcing this change, the army has a good chance of containing the guerrillas in the province. Otherwise, the government will most likely suffer a serious setback in its heavily publicized Tucuman operation--something it can ill afford with urban terrorism on the upswing. [redacted] 3.5(c) 3.5(c)

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